

What has changed in 20 years and what's important now?

Interview with Jean-Claude Dravet, PMP®¹

Honorary President
PMI France Chapter



Interviewed by Yasmina Khelifi

International Correspondent, PM World Journal
Paris, France

Introduction to the interviewee

Jean-Claude Dravet is one of the founders of PMI France Chapter and still an active volunteer at the Chapter. From 2000 until now, Jean-Claude Dravet has worked as a Consultant (Organization, Audits, Business Plans) and Teacher of Project Management inside multi-cultural companies and in Universities / High School (Masters).

He worked for 32 years (from 1969 to mid-2000) for IBM in their Development Laboratory (La Gaude, France and Raleigh, North Carolina-USA). Managing Human Resources (up to 150 people), Projects and programs (10M\$ to 15M\$ each). He is now retired and coaches students in Project Management.

He is still an active volunteer at PMI France, always ready to share knowledge and help. More at <https://www.linkedin.com/in/jean-claude-dravet-0913b31/>

¹ How to cite this interview: Khelifi, Y. (2021). What has changed in 20 years and what's important now? Interview with Jean-Claude Drivet; *PM World Journal*, Vol. XI, Issue I, January.

Interview

First of all, thank you for accepting an interview request from PMWJ.

Q1: You are teaching project management in a French business school for 20 years. Over the years, what changes have you seen in the way you teach project management?

JC Dravet (Dravet): In the early 2000's, Internet was not that popular; WIFI was just emerging and not yet popular, so access to Project Management resources was very limited. So teaching "Project Management" was mainly to develop "Project Management Fundamentals Best practices" according to standards, insist on the importance of Project Management, then have practical exercises thru several Case studies and Microsoft Project.

Over time, Internet has brought a huge amount of information, directly available on computers (starting from PMBOK, PMI resources, templates, case studies,) and with WIFI deployment, everything is now available in classrooms during lectures and exercises.

So lectures had to evolve from "discovering project management according to PMBOK" to more interactive discussions such as:

- Ask students to do some research before the class and be prepared to report on their research, give their understanding, answer some questions about "WHY" these PM values are important, "HOW" to use them, develop more teamwork before and during the class, perform practical applications
- Be prepared for discussions, simulations, practical exercises
- Perform real projects coached by real PM in partnership with real companies across full year curriculum

In addition, AGILE is now everywhere, it was introduced as an additional approach to perform Project Management, and has moved step by step in several years, to become now fully integrated as part of the PM knowledge that students need to develop and practice.

Q2: Over the years, what changes have you see in the way the students in the business school approach project management?

Dravet: Students want more and more to see how Project Management can help them to find a job, better understand how it will help to better understand how a Company is operating, how it will help to perform better and achieve their goals.

Q3: How do your students practise project management? What do you advise them? Because I think project management is learnt also through practise.

Dravet: Students want to practice PM on real projects and want to understand the benefits of using tools and techniques and Best Practices. So following approaches are used:

- Case studies discussions, simulations
- Usage of tools such as Microsoft Project to plan and track execution
- Apply PM on real project proposed by partner's companies and coached by PM. These projects are performed each year, from September to April, in groups of 5 to 10 students

Q4: What are the main questions asked by the students before the pandemic?

Dravet: I would say the following:

- Why should I be interested by Project Management?
- Why should I take a PMI Certification?
- What is the value of CAPM or PMP certification on the market?

Q5: What are the questions asked now after one year of pandemic?

Dravet: Same questions, with more focus on importance of AGILITY and Risks management.

Both are clearly related because uncertainty is growing everywhere, needs are changing, pandemic has generated situation where "we don't know" what will happen, we don't have immediate answers, and we need to deal with. On one side the pandemic has generated big threats while some of them have generated big opportunities.

Pandemic has forced us, to be creative, take advantage of new technologies to create new solutions (eg: WEB conferences, WEB meeting, remote work,...) and sometimes these new solutions forced us to change our way of thinking, our way of operating. Very often this is creating breakthrough, time saving, money saving.

Q6: And what would you recommend to your students to succeed in a career in project management?

Dravet: Understand both **Hard skills** (tools and techniques) and **Soft skills** (Human resources, Leadership, Communication) associated to Project Management. Practice and demonstrate that you are able to take advantage of these skills to make the difference

Q7: You were one of the founders of PMI France. What brought you to the idea of creating a project association?

Dravet: PMI Standards were considered as Best Practices to improve project results. The intent was to share knowledge, develop a professional network, deploy a common language to better understand each other and improve project performances.

Q8: Without being offensive, you are supposed to be retired for some years and you still go on teaching project management and being an active volunteer at PMI France. Why?

Dravet: Yes, I am retired from my professional life. I stopped very recently teaching Project Management, but I am still in contact with SKEMA Business School, to coach each year a group of students on a real project.

The project is aimed to organize a Conference/Job Fair to facilitate contacts between students looking for internship, temporary or full-time jobs and partner's companies looking for students with PM knowledge. This is a national project I am sponsoring on behalf of PMI France. The project is named PMPD (Project Management Professional Day). It started as local, then moved to National (France) and should expanded to Europe in coming years.

This is a good way to continue as volunteer inside PMI France and deploy PM knowledge to NextGen.

Q9: What are the 3 top skills you recommend for a project manager in the new normal?

Dravet: The following are my top three:

- **Communication:** This is the most important skill needed to make sure we understand each other as project stakeholders not only at a given point in time but all across the project life, and by a continuous communication we can detect any change and negotiate the effects on the project. Listening to all stakeholders is key to staying tuned with them, anticipate any potential slippage and manage them properly.
- **Leadership:** This skill is mandatory for a Project Manager to build a high team spirit, generate confidence and trust between each stakeholder. It is closely related to communication (Team building, Conflict resolution, Decision making).
- **Agility:** In this new normal world, with high levels of uncertainty and evolving very fast, we cannot predict everything and execute according to plan. So we need to be prepared to be adaptive, within a framework, and be flexible enough to adjust, based on previous results and on stakeholder's mind set changes

during project execution. Best Practices and rules from waterfall project management must still be applied, and probably we may end up with a good hybridization of agility and waterfall.

These 3 skills can be developed over time, by practicing, by continuous training, by always being open to change and ready to improve oneself. Collecting periodic feedback, lessons learned contributes also to a continuous improvement on personal behaviour. We are never done, but we can always improve!!!

Q10: Do you have a last message to PWJ readers, please?

Dravet: My last message will be: “Believing in your dreams is starting to make them come true”. PMI France Chapter creation was the result of one of my dreams!!!!

About the Interviewer



Yasmina Khelifi

Paris, France



Yasmina Khelifi, PMP, PMI- ACP, PMI-PBA is an experienced project manager in the telecom industry. Along with her 20-year career at [Orange S.A.](#) (the large French multinational telecommunications corporation), she sharpened her global leadership skills, delivering projects with major manufacturers and SIM makers. Yasmina strives for building collaborative bridges between people to make international projects successful. She relies on three pillars: project management skills, the languages she speaks, and a passion for sharing knowledge.

She is a PMP certification holder since 2013, a PMI- ACP and PMI-PBA certification holder since 2020. She is an active volunteer member at PMI France and PMI UAE, and a member of PMI Germany Chapter. French-native, she can speak German, English, Spanish, Italian, Japanese and she is learning Arabic. Yasmina loves sharing her knowledge and experiences at work, in her volunteers' activities at PMI, and in [projectmanagement.com](#) as a regular blogger. She is also the host and co-founder of the podcast [Global Leaders Talk with Yasmina Khelifi](#) to help people in becoming better international leaders.

Yasmina can be contacted at <https://yasminakhelifi.com/> or LinkedIn:
<https://www.linkedin.com/in/yasminakhelifi-pmp-telecom/>

Visit her correspondent profile at <https://pmworldlibrary.net/yasmina-khelifi/>